

TOWN OF STOW

Town Meeting Handbook



May 1, 2002

Note: Please recycle this *Handbook* for use at future Town Meetings by placing this in one of the discard boxes as you leave Town Meeting.

STOW TOWN MEETING HANDBOOK

The open Town Meeting method of local self-government is deeply embedded in Stow's life as a town. The enduring principle underlying Town Meetings is that, though the minority shall be heard and absentees protected, the majority will decide. Whatever the perception of the open Town Meeting, it is difficult to see how citizens can be more perfectly represented than by each registered voter having the opportunity to participate fully and directly in making decisions which:

- Elect the Town's officers, paid and unpaid,
- Establish salaries for the town's paid positions,
- Vote to appropriate money to operate the Town,
- Vote on local statutes, called bylaws.

Many such decisions are controlled by the State, such as minimum funding for education under the Education Reform law. But within the limits allowed by State law, the open Town Meeting provides an example of democracy combined with self-responsibility. When we meet as a Town Meeting, we become the legislative body and make decisions that impact all residents of our community. It is not unusual for the vote on an article to be close, therefore a belief that your comments and vote do not count is not valid. Voter's comments during debate can impact the thinking and voting for many voters. Attend Town Meeting, listen to the presentations, participate in the debate, and vote. Our town needs your participation at Town Meeting.

As always, we are interested in your feedback on what works well and what needs improvement at Town Meetings. There will be forms available for you to record your comments as you leave the meeting.

Collectively the information in the *Stow Town Meeting Handbook* includes the following items:

- 1) Town Meeting Participants (page 2 - 3),
- 2) Stow Town Meeting Tradition, including Role of the Town Meeting Moderator (Moderator) and Voter Etiquette (page 4 - 5),
- 3) Stow Town Meeting Procedures (page 6 - 9),
- 4) Glossary of Financial Terms (page 10 - 11),
- 5) Consent Calendar Procedure (page 12), and
- 6) Town Meeting Presentation Guide Overview (page 13).

We recommend that you make use of the *Stow Town Meeting Handbook* at this Town Meeting and then recycle it for use at future Town Meetings. You can also recycle the Handbook by leaving it in one of the discard boxes as you leave Town Meeting. Additional copies are available from the Town Clerk.

The *Town Meeting Presentation Guide* includes information, specifications and sample presentations to assist voters, town officials, and visitors in preparing Town Meeting presentations. Additional copies are available from the Town Clerk

Edward E. Newman
Moderator
May 1, 2002

Note: This information has been prepared to assist those who attend Town Meeting to understand how the meeting proceeds and to help and encourage those who wish to participate. It attempts to address questions that frequently arise. The Moderator appreciates suggestions for clarification or inclusion of additional topics for future revisions.

TOWN MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Registered voters in Stow serve in a variety of roles during Town Meetings:

CHECKERS verify that those attending the Town Meeting are registered voters. Upon entering the Hale School, voters and non-voters will first register for each session with the CHECKERS in two or more lines grouped alphabetically by voter last name. The CHECKERS may issue registered voters a color-coded Voter Identification Card to be used during all votes to distinguish registered voters from non-registered meeting attendees. The Minuteman and Nashoba Regional School District Superintendents and non-resident town department heads, by right, and other regional school district officials and non-voters, with the permission of the Town Meeting, may address the meeting. Non-registered voters may attend, but may not vote and may be required to sit in a designated location or section.

TOWN MEETING MEMBERS are those Stow voters who attend any session of a Town Meeting and have registered with the Checkers. There is no designated seating for Town Meeting members.

The **MODERATOR**, elected each three years, presides over the Town Meeting using *Town Meeting Time*, Third Edition, by Johnson, Trustman and Wadsworth as the determining rules of parliamentary law as provided in the town bylaws. The MODERATOR is located on the stage, behind the podium. Appointments of a Deputy Moderator, an Assistant Moderator and a Temporary Moderator allow the Town Meeting to continue should the Moderator choose to step aside during a portion of a meeting or is unavailable for a meeting, and to preside at overflow locations (cafeteria or gymnasium) during a meeting.

- A **DEPUTY MODERATOR** is appointed by the Moderator at the annual Town Meeting, with the approval of the Town Meeting members, for a one-year term. The Deputy Moderator presides over the meeting *if the Moderator is unavailable, at the request of the Moderator, or at a location remote from the auditorium* that serves as an overflow area for voters and non-voters.
- An **ASSISTANT MODERATOR** may be appointed by the Moderator for the Town Meeting session to *preside at the place of meeting where the Moderator is not present (gymnasium or cafeteria)*. The ASSISTANT MODERATOR has all the powers vested by law in the Moderator to preside at and regulate the proceedings in the meeting at which she/he presides, except that she/he may not recognize any citizen desiring to address the meeting without the permission of the Moderator.
- A **TEMPORARY MODERATOR** is elected by the Town Meeting members for that Town Meeting in the *absence of the Moderator and Deputy Moderator* and has all the powers vested by law in the Moderator.

The **SELECTMEN**, a five-member board elected for three-year staggered terms, prepare the warrant and are responsible for scheduling the date, starting time and location of the Town Meeting, posting the warrant, preparing the meeting facility and carrying out the decisions of the Town Meeting. The SELECTMEN are seated at the front of the auditorium.

The **SELECTMEN'S ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** prepares the warrant under the direction of the Selectmen, may serve as a timekeeper for the meeting, and is seated with the Selectmen.

The **TOWN CLERK**, appointed by the Selectmen, maintains the official record of Town Meeting proceedings and elections and also serves as a timekeeper. The TOWN CLERK prepares the ballot and material for town elections. The TOWN CLERK is seated adjacent to the Moderator.

The **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**, appointed by the Selectmen, is the chief administrative officer of Stow and is responsible for preparation of the annual operating budget and a capital outlay program for Town Meeting consideration. The Town Administrator assists the Selectmen by speaking to operational matters of the Town. The TOWN ADMINISTRATOR is seated with the Selectmen.

The **TOWN COUNSEL**, appointed by the Selectmen, serves as legal counsel to town officials, boards and committees. At the request of the Moderator, TOWN COUNSEL may address Town Meeting to offer an opinion on the legality of proposed bylaw changes as well as other matters in the disposition of the Town's business. TOWN COUNSEL is seated with the Selectmen.

The **FINANCE COMMITTEE**, a five-member board appointed by the Moderator, presents an overview of the financial position of the town, the financial impact of the actions being considered at the Town Meeting, and makes a recommendation on each article included in the warrant. The FINANCE COMMITTEE and associate members are seated at the front of the auditorium.

The **PLANNING BOARD**, a five-member elected board, makes a recommendation to the Town Meeting on all zoning articles. Planning Board articles require a public hearing prior to the board taking its vote on the zoning issue. The report of the public hearing and the vote of the PLANNING BOARD are available at Town Meeting.

The **TELLERS**, appointed by the Moderator and sworn by the Town Clerk, count the votes if a "Teller" or "counted" vote is required. TELLERS have no special seating location.

Note:

Stow has a bylaw provision allowing a **ZERO QUORUM** at all Town Meetings. As long as the Moderator and Town Clerk are available, and the warrant has been properly executed with return of service, a Town Meeting can be called into session, regardless of the number of voters in attendance. This enables Town Meeting sessions to begin at the scheduled time.

STOW TOWN MEETING TRADITION

Town Meeting procedures are consistent from town to town. However, each town establishes its own traditions for the conduct of the Moderator and voters at its Town Meetings. Some traditions can evolve into bylaws. Most traditions become routine and carry over from session to session and meeting to meeting without formalized votes or specific bylaws. Since each Town Meeting is a separate and unique opportunity for voters to assemble to conduct the affairs of the Town of Stow, the Moderator has the responsibility of incorporating and adapting these traditions, with consistency, into the conduct of the meeting. Voters have the responsibility of understanding and respecting Stow's unique traditions. Traditions will continue to evolve over time.

Role of the Town Meeting Moderator

Stow voters expect the following of the Town Meeting Moderator:

1. Call Town Meeting to order at the designated location and time.
2. Request action from the floor (i.e., make a motion under an article, second a motion).
3. Establish time limits for presentations and debate.
 - a. Limit presentations by article sponsor – fifteen (15) minutes
 - b. Limit each voter's debate (question, comment or motion) – three (3) minutes
 - c. Limit responses to voter's debate
 - d. After each thirty (30) minutes of debate, confirm that additional time for debate is necessary by requesting a motion to "Call the Question" (see page 6).
4. Warn presenters and voters when they are approaching the time limit.
5. Recognize speakers at the microphones: voters use microphones at the front of the auditorium, cafeteria, or gymnasium, while town officials use other microphones at their seats.
6. Recognize approved non-voters who wish to address the meeting.
7. Permit no one to speak without being recognized, including a clarification (exception: "Point of Order" see page 7).
8. Allow speakers to be heard without interruption.
9. Summarize the motion to be voted upon.
10. Call for the vote (stating the percent required to pass, the method of voting, and the procedure to count – see page 9).
11. Declare the outcome of a vote.
12. Recess, adjourn and/or dissolve Town Meeting.
13. Rule on matters of procedure (consult with Town Counsel).
14. Be consistent and impartial in matters of procedure and rulings.
15. Gather feedback from voters on the Town Meeting process.

Note: Rulings of the Moderator regarding procedure and other matters of conduct of Town Meeting are final.

Voter Etiquette

The Moderator expects the following from the voters of Stow:

1. Voters should stand in line at the microphone(s) located in the auditorium, or the cafeteria or the gymnasium for their comments or questions. Generally, voters may stand at any of the microphones designated for voter use. However, should the Moderator advise the voters that the microphones are for a designated use, IN FAVOR or OPPOSED, the microphone on the voter's right is for those IN FAVOR of an article, while the microphone on the voter's left is for those OPPOSED to an article. If a voter is undecided, he/she may stand in either line. The Moderator will first recognize a voter from the IN FAVOR line and then a voter from the OPPOSED line, and then alternate between the two when voters are in both lines.
2. Await recognition by the Moderator at the microphones (exceptions: "Point of Order" (See page 7), handicapped).
3. Give priority to voters in line at microphones who have not spoken on the motion.
4. Clearly state name and address when recognized by the Moderator.
5. Address comments only to the Moderator.
6. Limit comments, amendments, questions and debate to the motion under discussion.
7. Discuss new information - not be repetitive.
8. Engage in debate OR make a motion, but not both at the same recognition (i.e., trip to the microphone).
9. Discuss issues, not personalities. It is not appropriate to reference voters by name. Use "the previous speaker" or "a prior speaker" when referring to another speaker.
10. Keep comments or questions within time limits.
11. Applause or other verbal outbursts are not appropriate (exception: formal recognition).
12. Vote: Voters remain seated in the auditorium, cafeteria, or gymnasium and display their Voter Identification Card when a vote is called. No admittance is allowed until the vote is declared. If a paper ballot is called for, a voter is to correctly obtain, mark and deposit the ballot as instructed.
13. Provide amendments to a motion in writing to Town Counsel and then to the Moderator prior to or at the time of making such motion.
14. No beverages or refreshments in the auditorium or gymnasium. No smoking is allowed on school grounds.
15. Audible pagers and cellphones are to be turned off while in the auditorium, cafeteria or gymnasium.
16. No cameras or recording devices within the auditorium without the approval of the Moderator.

STOW TOWN MEETING PROCEDURES

The official procedures for Town Meeting are contained in the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL), the Town Charter, the General Bylaws of the Town (Bylaws), and the rules of parliamentary law contained in *Town Meeting Time* by Johnson, Trustman & Wadsworth. A copy of *Town Meeting Time* is available at the Randall Library. The following is a summary for reference.

- Adjourn** At the conclusion of business at any session, the Moderator may say, "A motion for ADJOURNMENT is in order." The motion, its second and the affirmative vote for the "Motion to Adjourn" will ADJOURN the Town Meeting to a specified date, time and place. An annual Town Meeting, which includes the election of local officials, is adjourned between the sessions until action on all articles has been taken, and then, for the annual town election, to the Tuesday in May which falls on the eighth day following the start of the annual meeting. Town Meeting may again be adjourned to a specific date and time following the annual town elections if all articles of the Town Meeting warrant have not been acted upon.
- Amendment** An AMENDMENT to the MOTION under discussion may be offered by any voter and must be submitted in writing to Town Counsel for review and then to the Moderator prior to or at the time the motion to amend is made. The Moderator may refuse to accept an amendment that is not immediately available in writing, is outside of the scope (four corners) of the article, or for a zoning article, if it is broader than presented in the Warrant and presented at the public hearing. The AMENDMENT is passed by a simple majority, regardless of the vote required to carry the main MOTION. Only one AMENDMENT to a main MOTION can be discussed at any one time. The AMENDMENT must be voted upon before additional AMENDMENTS can be entertained or debate of the main motion is again taken up.
- Article** The purpose of the warrant ARTICLE is to apprise or to "warn" the voters of the subject matter to be discussed at the meeting. The wording of the ARTICLE need not provide details of the precise action that the meeting will be asked to take. The Moderator may interpret articles in a liberal manner and not with strictness or rigidity. However, main motions and amendments must relate to the original intent and purpose of the ARTICLE printed in the warrant, often referred to as the "four corners" of the ARTICLE.
- Call the Question, Move the Question** A voter may terminate debate by making a motion at a microphone to "Call the Question" or "Move the Question." This motion is not debatable. The voter making the motion may not interrupt a speaker. This motion requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If the motion passes, the most recent motion or amendment under discussion is immediately put to a vote.
- Consent Calendar** The CONSENT CALENDAR groups a number of articles which past experience suggest will be routine, non-controversial and predictable. These articles are acted upon as a group and without questions or debate. Voters may remove an article from the CONSENT CALENDAR and have it returned to its original position in the warrant.
- Debate** DEBATE is limited to the MOTION made under an article or line item within an article. The Moderator may specify a time limit for presentations, questions or debate, and the Moderator may remind voters to avoid repetition and to keep remarks brief. Voters may be recognized by the Moderator alternatively by microphone location or by position (in favor/opposed) to provide a balance of viewpoints during the debate. Voters should display their color-coded Voter Identification Card whenever addressing the meeting.

Disorderly Conduct	No person may address the meeting without authorization from the Moderator. If any person, after warning from the Moderator, persists in DISORDERLY CONDUCT, the Moderator may order the person to withdraw. If the person does not withdraw, the Moderator may order the person removed from the building.
Dissolve	DISSOLUTION of the Town Meeting is the final action or motion of any Town Meeting. A motion to dissolve the meeting concludes the business of the meeting. The next Town Meeting must be called by a new warrant.
Elections	ELECTIONS are the final article of the annual Town Meeting warrant. Such elections may take place before, after or during the business meeting, depending on a determination by the Selectmen, in accordance with law. The offices open for election are listed in the last article of the Town Meeting warrant. ELECTIONS for such offices as Planning Board, Regional School District Committee and Selectmen are currently held on the Tuesday which falls on the eighth day following the date of the start of the annual Town Meeting.
Motion	A MOTION made under an article must spell out the details of the action to be taken by the voters. To be in order, the MOTION must be germane to the subject matter described in the article printed in the warrant. Matters incidental to and connected with the subject of the article are proper for inclusion in the MOTION that is to be considered and acted upon. A MOTION calling for action, which is more restrictive or specific than the action contemplated by the general wording of a warrant article, is acceptable. Expansion in a MOTION of an action called for by the warrant article to a more general or expansive action is usually not acceptable. Zoning articles present special problems because these require that a public hearing must be held prior to the Planning Board's recommendation, and revisions that can be made by motion on Town Meeting floor are therefore more restrictive than for other articles. It is the duty of the Moderator, with the advice of Town Counsel, to regulate the proceedings, to determine whether the motion is accepted and if the motion is within the scope (four corners) of the article as printed in the warrant.
Point of Order	A voter may interrupt the proceedings and rise to a POINT OF ORDER if the voter questions the legality or propriety of the proceedings. If the voter is recognized and the objection is reasonable, the Moderator will take immediate steps to rectify the matter. A voter should not interrupt a speaker to ask a question or request clarification.
Presiding Officer (Moderator)	The Town Moderator, or Deputy Moderator or Temporary Moderator in the absence of the Town Moderator or at the request of the Moderator, is the presiding officer at all sessions of the Town Meeting. The Moderator calls the meeting to order at the designated time and determines that a quorum is present. The duty of the Moderator is to forward the transaction of all of the Town's business in an orderly manner and in such a way that the will of the assembled Town Meeting members related to the articles printed in the warrant is clearly expressed. The Moderator has complete authority over matters of decorum, including the power to direct that an offending Town Meeting member or citizen, after warning, be removed from the building. Rulings of the Moderator regarding procedure and other matters of conduct of Town Meeting are final.
Quorum	Stow has a bylaw provision allowing a ZERO QUORUM at all Town Meetings. As long as the Moderator and Town Clerk are available, and the warrant has been properly executed with return of service, a Town Meeting can be called into session, regardless of the number of voters in attendance. This enables Town Meeting sessions to begin at the scheduled time

Recess	A RECESS means the Town Meeting has not adjourned or dissolved but is taking a break and will continue on the same day.
Reconsideration	RECONSIDERATION is governed by a town bylaw: “No vote on a main motion made under any article in the warrant shall be again taken into consideration after having been disposed of unless ordered by a vote of two-thirds of the voters present and voting, and no vote on such action shall be taken into RECONSIDERATION in any event after the lapse of two hours from the time of the disposition of the vote, time to be measured only while the Town Meeting is in session, unless announcement of intent to reconsider at a fixed place within the warrant, or at a fixed time, is made within the same two-hour period. Once RECONSIDERATION of a vote on a main motion under an article has been moved and voted upon, the vote may not again be reconsidered within the same meeting.” A motion for reconsideration is debatable.
Resolutions	The Town Meeting may wish to thank a person or group for service to the Town or offer other courtesies. Such complimentary expressions may be made at the beginning of the meeting through a RESOLUTION that is not legally binding. The RESOLUTION may be recorded in the minutes of the meeting for the sake of history and to further honor the person or group. Whether or not resolutions are entertained at all is at the discretion of the Moderator. The RESOLUTION is put to the voters and the vote is taken as a non-binding sense of the meeting. A count of the vote is not taken. No article is needed on the warrant.
Second	Each motion requires the support of a second voter (a SECOND) prior to action on the motion. Any voter may second a motion.
Sense of the Meeting	Occasionally the Moderator will ask voters to provide an opinion or recommendation on a topic related to the business contained in the warrant. The question is put to the voters, and the vote is taken as a non-binding SENSE OF THE MEETING. This vote is for information purposes only. Therefore, the vote is neither counted nor does the Town Clerk record it in the minutes of the meeting.
Take Any Action Relative Thereto	The words “or take any action relative thereto,” or a similar phrase, may allow a more liberal interpretation of the article, but should not be relied upon to justify any action that is not reasonably relevant. The words allow voters to act on the motion, amend the motion, take no action, etc.
Take No Action	All articles appearing in the warrant must be acted upon before the Town Meeting can be dissolved. The sponsor of an article may make a motion to TAKE NO ACTION, if a change in circumstance makes it unwise or unnecessary to consider the article. This motion requires a majority vote, is debatable, and is considered a negative vote.
Terminate Debate	Debate may end because 1) no voter or town official wishes to be recognized, 2) possibly after a reminder by the Moderator that the discussion is becoming repetitious, 3) as a result of a two-thirds vote by the meeting on a motion to "CALL THE QUESTION" or "MOVE THE QUESTION", or 4) at the expiration of a specified debate period with a two-thirds vote.
Test Vote	Whenever a motion requires (by statute) a four-fifths or nine-tenths vote to pass, the Moderator may so indicate this and may first call for an unofficial TEST VOTE. The purpose of the TEST VOTE is to allow the meeting to sense the climate for passage. For these votes, the Moderator must declare the vote unanimous or call for an official count. If it is clear that an overwhelming majority favor the motion, abstention by the dissenters when the final vote is taken can provide a unanimous vote and avoid the need for a time-

consuming count by the Tellers. The Moderator is able to declare a majority or 2/3s (bylaw) vote without an exact count being taken by the Tellers.

**Town Meeting
Presentation Guide**

The Presentation Guide and Presentation Template were developed for the benefit of any town official or voter who prepares materials for presentation at Town Meetings. Portions of the Presentation Guide may also be of use to other voters wishing to speak in favor or opposed to an article. Presenters who use the Presentation Template should feel comfortable that the type style, font size, color selection and suggested sequence of charts can be used to develop a presentation that can be seen by the voters in the hall. A soft copy of the master Presentation Template is installed on several PC's in Stow Town Building. Please bring a blank diskette to the Town Clerk to obtain a softcopy of the Presentation Guide for your use.

**Voter Identification
Card**

Checkers may issue a color-coded Voter Identification Card to voters when they register for each session of Town Meeting. Voters must display the VOTER IDENTIFICATION CARD to gain access to the auditorium, to address the Town Meeting, and to cast their vote.

Voting

Most articles are decided by a MAJORITY VOTE unless otherwise specified by statute or bylaw. A TWO-THIRDS VOTE is required for amendments to zoning bylaws, for appropriations from the Stabilization Fund, for taking of land by eminent domain, for bond and override issues, and for other items, and for the procedure covered in the town's General Bylaws. The Moderator may call for a HAND VOTE. If Town Meeting members have been issued a color-coded Voter Identification Card by the Checkers, voters raise their hand, displaying the card, when there is a call for a HAND VOTE. If the outcome is in doubt, the Moderator will call for an official count of the VOTE, known as a TELLER VOTE. If seven or more voters immediately question a HAND VOTE, the Moderator must verify the VOTE. There are rare occurrences when a four-fifths or nine-tenths vote is required. Unless declared unanimous by the Moderator, the Tellers must count the FOUR-FIFTHS or NINE-TENTHS VOTES.

Warrant

A meeting is called by the posting of a WARRANT at least seven (7) days prior to the annual meeting, and fourteen (14) days prior to a special Town Meeting. At the discretion of the Selectmen, every household may receive a copy of the warrant. The WARRANT lists the Town Meeting's starting time, place(s) and agenda (articles or items of business) to be acted upon by the voters. The WARRANT for the annual meeting includes, among other business, the budget for the coming fiscal year (July 1st through June 30th). Articles may be placed on the WARRANT by the Selectmen, town committees or by a petition signed by any ten (10) or more voters for an annual Town Meeting, or any one hundred (100) or more voters for a special Town Meeting, except in all cases when any other number is required by the General Laws. The only articles that may be considered by the Town Meeting are those articles that appear in the WARRANT. Articles are generally taken up in the order in which they appear in the WARRANT (Exception: see Consent Calendar).

**Voter Information
Table**

All documents related to articles discussed at a session of Town Meeting shall be delivered and made available to voters at the VOTER INFORMATION TABLE. All documents shall have the article number printed in the upper left-hand corner and the sponsor's name, address and telephone number printed in the upper right-hand corner. The sponsor is responsible for making sufficient copies of the document available for the voters and providing a copy to the Moderator. Only documents related to the articles for the current Town Meeting shall be presented on the VOTER INFORMATION TABLE.

GLOSSARY OF FINANCIAL TERMS

APPROPRIATE: Authority granted by a legislative body (i.e. Town Meeting), to make expenditures for specific purposes, i.e., spend money.

APPROPRIATE AND TRANSFER: Earmarks funding for a specific purpose by transferring a specified amount from an existing account.

EXCESS LEVY: The EXCESS LEVY is the difference between the LEVY and the MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LEVY.

FREE CASH - AVAILABLE FUNDS: The amount of Surplus Revenue on July 1st, which is over and above any uncollected taxes from previous years. Once certified by the State Director of Accounts, Free Cash is available for use by the Town Meeting.

LEVY: The total actual dollar amount of property taxes that are assessed to all property owners in the town during each fiscal year. The LEVY is calculated at the beginning of each fiscal year by the Assessors by taking into consideration any and all receipts, spending appropriations from the annual and special Town Meetings, actions approved by voters at the polls, and the State assessments charged to the Town. The LEVY may equal the sum of the LEVY LIMIT plus debt and capital expenditure exclusions (MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LEVY), but cannot exceed the sum thereof.

LEVY LIMIT: The total Levy allowed by Proposition 2½ is 2½% of the full and fair assessed market value of the entire town, or a maximum tax rate of \$25 per thousand dollars of assessed value. Each year, the LEVY LIMIT is calculated by the Assessors using the summation of the following items:

1. The LEVY LIMIT from the previous year,
2. 2½% of the previous year's LEVY LIMIT,
3. 2½% of the assessed value of new construction during the previous year, and
4. Overrides approved by the voters at Town Meetings *and* at the polls.

MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LEVY: The MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LEVY is the sum of the Levy Limit plus debt and capital expenditure exclusion(s) approved by the voters at Town Meetings and the polls.

OVERLAY RESERVE: Money raised by the Assessors to cover tax abatements, Appellate Court decisions and statutory exemptions.

OVERLAY SURPLUS: Unused Overlay Reserve that reverts to "free cash" at the end of the fiscal year, if so voted by the Board of Assessors

PROPOSITION 2½: An Act of 1980 that requires municipalities to limit total property taxes (also called the levy) to a maximum of 2½% of the full and fair market value of the entire town, and to limit the annual increase of the levy limit to 2½% plus the value of new construction ("new growth increase"), unless a majority of the voters approve via ballot one or more of the following:

1. **OVERRIDE**, which allows increasing the levy base above the limits imposed by Proposition 2½ and establishes a new permanent base for the levy; or
2. **DEBT EXCLUSION**, which allows a temporary increase above the limits imposed by Proposition 2½ (including both principal and interest payments) which expire after the debt is paid; or
3. **CAPITAL EXCLUSION**, which allows a temporary increase above the limits imposed by Proposition 2½ for one-year capital expenditures.

RAISE AND APPROPRIATE: Authority to raise a specified amount via taxes (the word “raise” alone includes borrowing) and to earmark those funds for a specific purpose, and to expend said monies.

RESERVE FUND: Money set aside by Town Meeting to be allocated under the control of the Finance Committee to fund departmental expenses during the fiscal year, which are extraordinary or unforeseen at the time of the annual or special Town Meeting. The Finance Committee acts as an agent for the Town Meeting, which would otherwise need to convene a Town Meeting to vote on the additional funding requests.

REVOLVING FUND: A mechanism to allow the Town to receive revenues from a specific service and to use those revenues to support that service without appropriation. Massachusetts General Laws impose specific limits on how much and for what purposes such monies may be expended, and certain funds further require annual reauthorization of the revolving fund by Town Meeting.

STABILIZATION FUND: An account to which funds may be added by the Town Meeting for future use and from which amounts may be appropriated at Town Meeting for any legal purpose, provided a two-thirds majority vote is attained. .

SURPLUS REVENUE: Cash, accounts receivable, and other assets, minus liabilities and reserves.

CONSENT CALENDAR PROCEDURE

As part of an effort to make our Town Meeting time more productive, and save time for discussion of key issues, the Board of Selectmen and Moderator have implemented the "Consent Calendar".

Each year there are a number of warrant articles on which past experience suggests that the **action will be routine, non-controversial and predictable**. Again, at this annual meeting these articles will be selected for inclusion in the Consent Calendar. As one of the first items of business there will be a motion to take all of these articles identified in the warrant and **act upon these as a group by a single brief affirmative main motion**, referred to as the Consent Calendar, which will also contain separate and specific motions for each such article included in the Consent Calendar. The language and the amount of money specified in the articles included in the Consent Calendar as printed in the warrant are subject to change. The motion made at Town Meeting will include any changes. The use of the Consent Calendar speeds the passage of warrant articles which the Selectmen and Moderator, in consultation with Town Counsel and the Finance Committee, believe should generate no controversy and can be properly voted without debate.

At the motion of the Consent Calendar, the Moderator will call out the number of each of the articles, one by one. If any voter has doubt about passing any motion, or wishes an explanation of any article included in the Consent Calendar, the voter should say the word "hold" in a loud voice when the article number is called by the Moderator. The Moderator will then inquire as to whether the request to hold is for a question or for debate. If the purpose of the request was merely to ask a question, an attempt to obtain a satisfactory answer will be made. If this occurs, the article will remain on the Consent Calendar. If the purpose of the request was to hold the article for debate, the article will be dropped from the Consent Calendar and restored to its original place in the warrant to be brought up, debated and voted on in the usual way. It is hoped that voters will remove articles from the Consent Calendar only in cases of genuine concern. After calling the individual articles on the Consent Calendar, the Moderator will ask that all articles remaining be **PASSED AS A UNIT** by a unanimous vote after a brief affirmative main motion is made inclusive of all articles, and the printed motions thereunder, remaining on the Consent Calendar.

Please review the proposed articles, and the printed motions thereunder, for the Consent Calendar and the related comments that are printed in the warrant. Please review them carefully.

THE CONSENT CALENDAR IS TAKEN UP AS ONE OF THE FIRST ORDERS OF BUSINESS AT THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Please do your homework before coming to Town Meeting. If you have any questions about the articles included in the Consent Calendar, motions or procedure please feel free to call the Town Administrator (897-2927) **before** Town Meeting.

TOWN MEETING PRESENTATION GUIDE OVERVIEW

This Presentation Guide and the two related Sample Presentations were designed for a first-time speaker/presenter, but even experienced presenters may find the information contained in these documents to be a valuable refresher. The Presentation Guide was prepared for the benefit of all who will be collecting and preparing information as an article sponsor for presentation to Stow Town Meetings. The Presentation Template has supporting information that describes how to install and operate the PowerPoint template when importing a presentation into the recommended presentation format. This information is attached to the document. Portions of the Presentation Guide and the Sample Presentations may also be of use to all other town officials and voters wishing to speak in favor or opposed to an article. The Presentation Guide, Presentation Template, and the Sample Presentations are available from the Town Clerk in softcopy. These materials may be reproduced and given to anyone having a use for them.

The information available for use consists of the following documents and files:

<u>File Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Stow TM Presentation Guide.doc	The Town Meeting Presentation Guide
Town Meeting-Gov.ppt	Sample Presentation for town officials and board members (includes Template)
Town Meeting-Voter.ppt	Sample Presentation for voters (Includes Template)

The Town Clerk serves as the focal point for the distribution of these documents and files and for all information and questions related to acquiring and using these items. The Town Clerk may also redirect you to another town employee to provide assistance or to answer your questions. The Town Clerk may be reached at 978-897-4514.

If you have suggestions to improve this Presentation Guide or the Sample Presentations or believe that additional information should be included that would be helpful to other presenters, please contact the Moderator, c/o Stow Town Building, 380 Great Road, Stow, MA 01775-0261.